

Mindfulness - *Satipaṭṭhāna*

The Path of Liberation & Purification of Beings

The Buddha, who attained enlightenment, discovered the world reality and kindly explained it to the world. The Buddha purified his mind completely eradicating all defilements in his mind. He is not a God or a God's messenger. There are no creations or God's messages in his teachings. The Buddha clearly says that whether a Buddha appears or not in the world, this world reality is there forever. Therefore, the Buddha's message is the truth that anyone can discover by his or her wisdom. Mindfulness, the path to overcome suffering and to achieve real happiness is the main teaching in Buddhism. Accordingly, understanding the cause of suffering and the practice (concentration and insight) to overcome suffering belong to mindfulness in Buddhism.

According to the Buddha's message, real happiness depends on how much we have overcome the suffering of old age, death and rebirth. The main reasons, we suffer, are greed, anger and delusion. Greed means attachment, craving or lustful desire. Anger means aversion or hatred. Delusion means the lack of understanding about the reason for suffering. When the world changes, and when the world is out of our control, we suffer because of these three reasons. If we are wise to overcome delusion, severe attachments and anger, we gradually overcome suffering in this life itself. Simultaneously, our happiness gradually increases. Practicing mindfulness is the direct path to overcome ignorance which is the main cause of suffering.

The Buddha's message that leads to getting rid of unsatisfactoriness and achieving true happiness is very clear and systematic. Listening to this message is a very rare opportunity. Today we have the chance to listen to it because of a lot of merits and blessings that we have done in our previous lives. The sublime truth that the Buddha explained is well expounded (*Svākkhato*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akālika*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opānaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Viññuhi*). The Buddha's main purpose was to point out the path of liberation from suffering. If the Buddha has preached any teachings to get rid of suffering, nobody can prove that it can't cause to get rid of suffering. According to Buddhism, understanding of suffering and cessation from suffering depend on our point of view. There are four causes (*Paññāvuddhi Kārānāni*) which help us to achieve wisdom. They are;

1. Association of good friends who explain the Buddha's real message (*Sappurisa sansevo*)
2. Listening to the Buddha's Message (*Saddhamma savanam*)
3. Wise Reflection (*Yoniso manasikāro*)
4. Practice (*Dhammānudhamma patipatti*)

As much as we are able to practice these four things in our lives, we can develop wisdom. Also, we are able to overcome suffering.

At the very beginning of the path of liberation, we should have a clear knowledge on what we practice and where it leads to or where the spiritual destination is. That is why the Buddha said; "I declare the cessation of suffering for the one who knows and sees the Dhamma". Here understanding of the Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*) is very important. Understanding Buddhism depends on understanding of the Dependent Origination.

He who sees the Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma.

(Yo paticcasamuppādam passati so dhammam passati)

He who sees the Dhamma sees the Dependent Origination.

(Yo dhammam passati so paticcasamuppādam passati)

He who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha.

(Yo dhammam passati so mam passati)

He who sees the Buddha sees the Dhamma.

(Yo mam passati so dhammam passati)

This is the real path to see the Dhamma and the Buddha as well. Hence the Dependent Origination is like the heart of Buddhism. This is the vision that should be first (*Sammāditthi pure javam*).

Understanding the Dependent Origination causes us to understand suffering, and understanding suffering helps us to understand the Four Noble Truths which is the main teaching in Buddhism. Also, if someone understands one noble truth, he realizes the other three truths as well. In this situation, the Buddha sometimes has explained one truth, sometimes two truths, sometimes all four truths according to the audience. Understanding of the four noble truths especially helps to realize the nature of ignorance which is the main cause of suffering. If someone can realize the nature of ignorance, he diligently tries to overcome ignorance which helps to overcome other unwholesome roots which are greed and anger. With the understanding of the dependent origination and four noble truths, the path which is the fourfold mindfulness can be found.

All Buddhist doctrines that the Buddha has explained in his 45 years of life focus on how to achieve happiness. In the same way the Buddha explained the path of getting rid of suffering. The main purpose of all beings is to be happy. Although they do everything in the name of happiness, unfortunately, they mostly live unhappily, or their hopes end with sorrow. The main reason for this situation is though we do everything to overcome illness, death and separation, those things themselves cause us to create more and more suffering. Here, the supreme Buddha always preaches us how to overcome suffering truly and live with real happiness. If we can listen to his message and practice it in our lives, we can get rid of suffering and achieve real happiness in this life itself. **Mindfulness which is praised and recommended in Buddhism many times is one of the most important doctrines that we should practice for liberation.**

Buddhism explains the reasons we suffer. Birth is suffering. Decay is suffering. Sickness is suffering. Death is suffering... Finally, Buddhism concludes all sufferings in five aggregates. In short, arising of the five aggregates is suffering (*Samkhittena pañcupādānakkhandā dukkhā*). The path of getting rid of suffering depends on understanding and releasing the grasping of the five aggregates. Practicing mindfulness is the path that leads to the liberation from the suffering of the five aggregates. Those five aggregates are;

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| i. Matter | (<i>Rupa</i> - රූප) |
| ii. Feelings | (<i>Vedanā</i> - වේදනා) |
| iii. Perception | (<i>Saññā</i> - සංකල්පය) |
| iv. Mental formations | (<i>Samkhāra</i> - සංඛාර) |
| v. Consciousness | (<i>Viññāna</i> - විඤ්ඤාණ) |

When we experience the world through our senses, these five aggregates arise together. They can't be separated. As the result of arising of these five things, we have an experience. These five aggregates suddenly arise and also cease instantly. When we experience something, they have not only arisen but also ceased. When we experience something through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue or body, these five senses can't get pleasure or pain. Those experiences arise and cease instantly, and the pleasure or pain that is sensed in mind is due to a past experience. However, we think that what we experience is in the present because of our ignorance. And that is why we suffer. If we can understand that these five aggregates arise and cease at the moment with the conditions, we are able to understand its impermanence. Then we know we have nothing to get attached or detached. It means that we are on the path of cessation of suffering. As much as we have this understanding, we have liberated ourselves from unsatisfactoriness and suffering.

Mindfulness guides us how to live in the present moment. When we spend our life, we mostly live in the past or future. Unfortunately, we don't know that we live in the past or future because of our ignorance and lack of mindfulness. We have lost the chance of seeing the beauty of the present experience. By practicing mindfulness, we train our mind not to go to the past or future without awareness and how to live in the present moment seeing the world reality. Our success or happiness and how far we have overcome suffering depend on the progress of our mindfulness. By practicing mindfulness, we train our mind to be aware of our mind and body. Mindfulness is the best friend who brings us true happiness. Similarly, mind without mindfulness is the worst enemy. Hence, we should be clever enough to live with this best friend getting rid of the worst enemy.

The importance of practicing mindfulness is always emphasized among Buddhist doctrines. Mindfulness is the seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path; it is the third faculty (or *indriya*) of The Five Spiritual Faculties; and it is also the first faculty of The Seven Enlightenment Faculties. According to this, we can think how important it is in Buddhism. Mindfulness in Buddhism relates to wisdom which is the understanding of impermanence. **Also, 'the complete heap of the wholesomeness or skillfulness is the four establishments of mindfulness'**. In other words, all the spiritual qualities which lead to liberation can be included (summarized) into mindfulness.

In this situation, all Buddhist teachings can be included into one topic that is mindfulness. Our spiritual success and real happiness depend on how far we have practiced mindfulness in our lives. Practicing Buddhism means practicing mental culture. Practicing mental culture means practicing mindfulness. Also, practicing mindfulness means practicing happiness. Finally, we can say very clearly that practicing of all teachings of the Buddha means practicing mindfulness. The entire dispensation of the Buddha depends on practicing mindfulness. Hence mindfulness is highly praised in Buddhism.

That is why Buddhism illustrates the one and only way;

for the purification of beings (*Sattānam visuddhiyā*),

for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation (*sokapariddavānam samatikkhamāya*),

for the eradicating of pain and grief (*dukkhadomanassanam attamgamaya*),

for the gaining of wisdom (*ñāyassa adhiḡamāya*)

for the attaining or realization of Nibbana or enlightenment (*nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*)

which is practicing the fourfold mindfulness.

Satipaṭṭhāna, Satipaṭṭhāna Bhāvanā and *Satipaṭṭhānabhāvanāgamini patipadā* Mindfulness, Mindfulness Meditation and the Path of Mindfulness Meditation

When we discuss mindfulness, we can see that a lot of people discuss it everywhere in the current society. Mostly they say mindfulness is living in the present moment. This is not an exact definition of mindfulness according to Buddhism. Mindfulness is not just living in the present moment. Mindfulness, which leads to overcome all sufferings completely, has a wider meaning in Buddhism. According to Vibhanga Sutta in Satipaṭṭhāna Samyutta of Samyutta Nikaya, he whoever wants to know and practice mindfulness should know three things about mindfulness. They are;

1. Mindfulness
2. Mindfulness Meditation
3. The Path of Mindfulness Meditation.

Mindfulness means keeping our attention in four areas as body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations. Additionally, mindful meditation means reflecting on the impermanence of the body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations as they arise and cease. The path to mindfulness meditation means understanding the noble eightfold path which consists of the four noble truths as,

Right Understanding (*Sammā diṭṭhi*)

Right Thoughts (*Sammā samkappa*)

Right Speech (*Sammā vācā*)

Right Action	(<i>Sammā kammantha</i>)
Right Livelihood	(<i>Sammā ājiva</i>)
Right Effort	(<i>Sammā vāyāma</i>)
Right Mindfulness	(<i>Sammā sathi</i>)
Right Concentration	(<i>Sammā samādhi</i>)

Understanding mindfulness in Buddhism depends on understanding the dependent origination which is described below.

The *Satipatthāna Sutta* deals with the fourfold development of '*Sati*', mindfulness and '*Patthāna*', establishment or practice. So '*Satipatthāna*' means establishment of mindfulness. The main purpose of practicing mindfulness is that investigating what happens to our mind and body and finally understanding our whole life. If we can clearly understand the process of our life as it is, we can overcome all suffering in our day-to-day life and in our whole *sansāric* journey.

Here are the four types of mindfulness we have to practice. They are;

- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of the body (*Kāyānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of sensation or feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind (*Cittānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind-objects (*Dhammānupassanā*)

When we practice mindfulness in these four areas, we develop attention and awareness about our body and mind. And we practice our mind to live in the present moment consciously. We mostly suffer because of the past or the future. If we lose our awareness about the present, it means we lose our happiness. That is why Buddhism emphasizes the importance of developing mindfulness.

• **The Contemplation of the body**

When we practice mindfulness in the field of the body, we develop it in six areas. They are;

- **Mindfulness of breathing (*Ānāpāna*).**

When someone breathes, he does it consciously.

- **Mindfulness of the four postures (*Iriyāpatha*)**

When someone is walking, he knows he is walking. When someone is standing, he knows he is standing. When someone is sitting, he knows he is sitting. When someone is lying down, he knows he is lying down.

- **Mindfulness of clear awareness (*Sampajañña*)**

When someone does everything from waking up to going to bed, he does all of them mindfully and wisely.

- **Mindfulness of the body parts (*Patikkulamanasikāra*)**

Here, the meditator considers all (32) parts of his body such as hair, body hair, nail, teeth, skin etc. are impure.

- **Mindfulness of the four elements (*Dhātumanasikāra*)**

Here, the meditator further pays attention to the four elements like earth (*Patavi*), water (*Āpo*), fire (*Tejo*) and air (*Vāyo*).

- **Mindfulness of the nine stages of a decaying dead body (*Navasivatika*)**

Here, the meditator recollects a dead body, what happens to the body after death (from moment of death to a skeleton). When he contemplates on his body according to the above areas, he sees arising and ceasing of the body according to conditions.

Accordingly he dwells contemplating (the nature of) the body in the body in regard to himself, or he dwells contemplating (the nature of) the body in the body in regard to others, or he dwells contemplating (the nature of) the body in the body in regard to himself and in regard to others, or he dwells contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or he dwells contemplating the nature of ceasing in the body, or he dwells contemplating the nature of arising and ceasing in the body, or else mindfulness that “there is a body” is established in him just as far as (is necessary for) a full measure of knowledge and a full measure of mindfulness, and he dwells independent, and without being attached to anything in the world.

- **The Contemplation of feelings (or sensation)**

Here, when someone is;

feeling a pleasant feeling, he knows that he feels a pleasant feeling,

feeling a painful feeling, he knows that he feels a painful feeling,

feeling a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant, he knows that he feels a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant,

feeling a sensual pleasant feeling, he knows that he feels a sensual pleasant feeling,

feeling a spiritual pleasant feeling, he knows that he feels a spiritual pleasant feeling,

feeling a sensual unpleasant feeling, he knows that he feels a sensual unpleasant feeling,

feeling a spiritual unpleasant feeling, he knows that he feels a spiritual unpleasant feeling,

feeling a sensual feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant, he knows that he feels a sensual feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant,

feeling a spiritual feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant, he knows that he feels a spiritual feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant.

Accordingly he dwells contemplating (the nature of) feelings in feelings in regard to himself, or he dwells contemplating (the nature of) feelings in feelings in regard to others, or he dwells contemplating (the nature of) feelings in feelings in regard to himself and in regard to others, or he dwells contemplating the nature of arising in the feelings, or he dwells contemplating the nature of ceasing in the feelings, or he dwells contemplating the nature of arising and ceasing in the feelings, or else mindfulness that “there are feelings” is established in him just as far as (is necessary for) a full measure of knowledge and a full measure of mindfulness, and he dwells independent, and without being attached to anything in the world.

• **The Contemplation of mind**

Here, the meditator considers his own mind whether it is lustful (*sarāga*) or not (*vitārāga*), hating (*sadosa*) or not (*vitadosa*), deluded (*samoha*) or undeluded (*vitamoha*), contracted (*samkhittam*) or distracted (*vikkhittam*), developed (*mahaggata*) or undeveloped (*amahaggata*), surpassed (*sa-uttara*) or unsurpassed (*anuttara*), concentrated (*samāhita*) or unconcentrated (*asamāhita*), liberated (*vimutta*) or unliberated (*avimutta*).

Accordingly he dwells contemplating (the nature of) the mind in the mind in regard to himself, or he dwells contemplating (the nature of) the mind in the mind in regard to others, or he dwells contemplating (the nature of) the mind in the mind in regard to himself and in regard to others, or he dwells contemplating the nature of arising in the mind, or he dwells contemplating the nature of ceasing in the mind, or he dwells contemplating the nature of arising and ceasing in the mind, or else mindfulness that “there is a mind” is established in him just as far as (is necessary for) a full measure of knowledge and a full measure of mindfulness, and he dwells independent, and without being attached to anything in the world.

• **The Contemplation of mind-objects**

- The five hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and scruples, skeptical doubt)
- The five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness)
- The six internal and external sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind – sight, sound, smell, taste, touching, mind-objects)
- The seven factors of enlightenment (Mindfulness, keen investigation, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, equanimity)
- The Four Noble Truths
 1. The unsatisfactoriness or suffering (*Dukkha Sacca*),
 2. The cause of unsatisfactoriness (*Samudaya Sacca*),
 3. The cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Nirodha Sacca*),
 4. The path that leads to cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Magga Sacca*)

When he contemplates his mind objects according to above areas as unwholesome and wholesome, he sees arising and ceasing of his mind-objects.

Accordingly he dwells contemplating (the nature of) mind-objects in (various) mind-objects in regard to himself, or he dwells contemplating (the nature of) mind-objects in (various) mind-objects in regard to others, or he dwells contemplating (the nature of) mind-objects in (various) mind-objects in regard to himself and in regard to others, or he dwells contemplating the nature of arising in mind-objects, or he dwells contemplating the nature of ceasing in mind-objects, or he dwells contemplating the nature of arising and ceasing in mind-objects, or else mindfulness that “there are (various) mind-objects” is established in him just as far as (is necessary for) a full measure of knowledge and a full measure of mindfulness, and he dwells independent, and without being attached to anything in the world.

As the result of practicing mindfulness by using Buddhist teachings, we don't stop only with concentrating the mind. With concentrated mind, we reflect on the world reality as impermanent seeing arising and ceasing of our mind and body. Here it is very important to understand the dependent origination. Our entire life is the five aggregates which arise at the moment with conditions and cease when conditions cease.

If we have any experience through our six senses, five aggregates arise together at the moment. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*-රූප), feelings (*Vedanā*-වේදනා), perception (*Saññā*-සංකීර්ණ), mental formations (mind-objects) (*Samkhāra*-සංකාර) and mind (*Viññāna*-විඤ්ඤාණ). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they instantly cease when the conditions cease. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and have to be known with insight. The nature of these five aggregates is arising and ceasing. At the moment of ceasing everything ceases without leaving anything remaining. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence** (*Ahuvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati*). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illustrates. If something is impermanent (*Anicca*), it is suffering (*Dukkha*). If something is suffering, it is out of our control (*Anatta*). If someone can realize these three characteristics as the world reality, he is able to overcome suffering.

When we see this reality, we understand there is nothing to grasp or reject. We realize that our life is a conditioned process. There is no particular certain being or person, it is only a process which always arises and ceases. With this true understanding we can gradually overcome suffering. Little by little we go forward on the path of liberation from suffering and unsatisfactoriness. By practicing tranquility (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation with discipline (*Sīla*) in speech and behavior, we reach the final bliss of liberation, full enlightenment. Here it is clear that mindfulness is the foundation of all doctrines. Living with mindfulness is like living in the field of the Buddha. It means we are away from suffering like decay, death and rebirth. Whenever we are without mindfulness, then we are in the field of the Mara. It means we are not far from suffering like sorrow, lamentation, grief, pain, decay, sickness, death and rebirth.

This understanding results our permanent equanimity, which is true happiness without any suffering even though we are in very complex situations. This is the highest refuge that we can gain by ourselves as the Buddha mentioned.

Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge. Dwell with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

Atta dīpā bhikkhave viharatha atta saranā na añña saranā,

Dhamma dīpā bhikkhave viharatha dhamma saranā na anna saranā. (Attadeepa Sutta)

As the result of practicing mindfulness, concentration and reflecting on impermanence are going to be filled. Finally, he who practices this path always keeps his mind in concentration. Also, he reflects on arising and ceasing of mind, feelings, consciousness and mental objects. Then he is able to overcome suffering.

The highest contemplation about all our experiences that the Buddha has pointed out to Bāhiya;

“In that case, Bāhiya, you should train yourself hence: In what is seen there must be only what is seen, in what is heard there must be only what is heard, in what is sensed there must be only what is sensed, in what is cognized there must be only what is cognized. This is the way, Bāhiya, you should train yourself.

Tasmātiha te, bāhiya, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ: ‘diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissatī’ti. Evañhi te, bāhiya, sikkhitabbaṃ. (Bāhiya Sutta, Udānapāli)

This is the real experience that an enlightened person lives in. This should be the final goal of everyone according to what the Supreme Buddha kindly preached. We should gradually practice the teachings of the Buddha, especially mindfulness, to reach this highest knowledge as much as we can before missing out the Buddha Sasāna.



May the Triple Gem Bless You!

May You be Mindful & Wise!

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